

WHAT MEN LIVE BY

About four feet below the level of the street, which is reached by a few stairs at the back leading to an outer door, is the basement occupied by SIMON. At the right of the door on a line with the pavement is a long narrow window through which one may see the feet of the passers-by. SIMON, who does most of the cobbling for the village, knows the wayfares by the boots which he has repaired. Under the window, placed so as to catch the meager light, is a cobbler's bench with tools on either side. At the left of the stairs are long gray curtains forming a kind of closet in which outer wraps are hung. In the corner is a small china closet. In the left wall is a hearth; here, over the fire the wife cooks the meals. Two old chairs huddle near the fire as though for warmth. A table, half concealed by a worn cloth, stands near the fireplace. Opposite the fireplace is a door leading into the inner room.

SCENE I

SIMON, old slow in movement, kindly of feature, is seated at his table, mending a pair of rough hide shoes. His wife, Matrena, as brown and dry as a chip, is on a stool by the fire, mending a tattered old sheepskin coat. Occasionally one sees the feet of pedestrians pass by the little window. SIMON glances up as they throw a shadow on his table.

MATRENA And who was that went by, Simon?

SIMON It was Thedka, my dear Matrena. Thedka, the footman of the Barina. The side-patch on his boot has lasted well.

MATRENA Yes, you make them last for so long that they do not need to come to you and so you have so little trade.

SIMON But, Matrena, I could not put on patches that would not last, then I should have no trade at all. I must do my best. That is the kind of man I am.

MATRENA Yes, yes, Simon, thst is the kind of man you are and so this is the kind of home we have, with hardly enough flour in the bin for one baking.

SIMON Don't fret Matrena. We shall not starve. God is good.

MATRENA Aye, God is good, but His handmen are far from the likeness in which He cast them. [A girl trips by.] Was tht Rozinka went by?

SIMON No, Rozinka has not such high heels. It was Ulka, the Barina's maid.

- MATRENA I might have guessed it. It's a pity since you shod all the servants in the Baron's household that the master would not let you make boots for him.
- SIMON The boots of the nobilities are brought from Paris, and are cut from northern leather. Trofinoff told me he broght five pairs from the station on his last trip.
- ★ MATRENA Trofinoff, hum! Did you not tell me Trofinoff^{Trofinoff} promised to come this afternoon to pay the eight roubles he has owed you three years coming Michaelmas?
- SIMON Aye, so he said.
- MATRENA So he said, but I'll warrant we'll never see a hair of his beard till he's come barefoot again. Now [holding up the sheepskin] I've done all I can to your sheepskin.^{cord} It's so thin the cold doesn't have to seek the holes to creep in: it walks through. It's thankful I'll be when we can buy another skin so that I can get out of the house the same time you gp.
- SIMON We'll buy a skin this very afternoon, my dear. When Trofinoff brings me the eight roubles, we shall add it to the ~~three~~^{two} you have saved and that ought to buy a good skin - if not a tanned one, at all events, a good rough one.
- MATRENA IF Trofinoff brings the money.
- SIMON He'll bring it, or I'll have the cap off his head, so I will. That is the kind of man I am.
- MATRENA If he were to come in and tell you he is hard up, you would tell him not worry his head about the roubles that God is good.
- SIMON No, I shall say, "Am I not hard up as well?"
- MATRENA Very well, if he comes we shall see what kind of man you are. Who was that?
- SIMON It was your friend, Anna Maloska, who wears shoes too small for her. I wonder that she did not stop.
- MATRENA She will stop on her way back from market^{the store} for there will be more news.
- SIMON [looking out the window and rising happily] But see here, Matrena, you wronged the good Trofinoff. He has come to pay the eight roubles as he promised. [There is a halting knock at the door] Coming! Coming! [He limps slightly as he hastens up the steps.]

MATRENA [as she crosses to go into the room at the right.] Well, Simon, I shall be the last to be sorry if your faith has been rewarded.

[She goes out as SIMON opens the door to the street. He comes down with TROFINOFF, a middle-aged, sharp-faced little man with gray beard and keen roving eyes. He carries a bundle wrapped in brown cloth.]

SIMON Welcom Trofinoff, I--salute--you.

TROFINOFF Welcome, fellow-brother. I wish you everything that is good.

SIMON I thank you, brother. Is all well at home?

TROFINOFF Not as well as might be, alas. Fuel takes much money these days and I have--a flat-purse. *am clean out*

SIMON Then it was doubly good of you, friend Trofinoff, to come to settle our account. My-good wife has not-a-kaftan or a-sheepskin to wear when it snows.

TROFINOFF I regret, Simon, I was unable to bring you the roubles I owed you. I am so hard pressed.

SIMON [with forced sternness.] Am I not hard up as well?

TROFINOFF Aye, but you have not so many mouths to fill, nor cattle to feed, nor grain to dispose of with so little profit.

SIMON Friend Trofinoff, you have--a-hut and-cattle, while I have to *own your own farm* all-on my back. *rent* You may grow your own bread; I have to buy mine. If you do not pay me, I-shall-not have money for-bread. *What about it?*

TROFINOFF You are not so grieved as I, brother, and had it been any one but you I should not have dared face him, but I knew the kind of man you were. I have heard you say, "Let us love one another."

SIMON That is so, for love is of God.

TROFINOFF So I said to my wife: *Annie* "Anya, if it were anyone but Simon, I would not dare take him our little one's shoes, but I know what kind of man he is: he loves the children and would not that the least of these should suffer and he could not help it." [He unwraps a tattered pair of shoes, belonging to a child.]

SIMON Aye, the little Sarah's shoes. They need soles badly and a toe cap.

TROFINOFF You will repair them for her, Simon?

SIMON Of course, brother, I - [He looks nervously toward the door to the inner room] Could you pay me something, Trofinoff? ~~Thomas~~

TROFINOFF Here are ^{5 dollars} two copecks. They will buy ^{milk + bread} a half-loaf for the wife, Simon. [He goes to the door.]

SIMON Thank you.

TROFINOFF And you shall have your roubles in a day or so -- as soon as my grain is paid for. ^{the balance}

SIMON I can get along very comfortably. ^{we have food and} While ~~one of us has a~~ warm-coat, why should we fret? ^{shelter} I ~~can stay in by the fire.~~ Only, of course, there's my wife. She keeps worrying about it

TROFINOFF Your wife has no cause to be anxious while she has such a kind husband, Simon. I will send for the boots shortly. Good day.

SIMON. Good day. God be with you, brother.

[TROFINOFF goes out. SIMON lays the copecks on the bench, and is examining the small shoes when MATRENA enters. He puts them behind his back guiltily.]

MATRENA Well, what are you hiding there? Did he bring you a gift with your money?

SIMON [sadly] No, -- he assured me, he was quite destitute.

MATRENA [enraged] Do you mean he brought you not even your eight roubles? [SIMON shakes his head.] What did I tell you, eh?

SIMON But he says he will bring them soon -- when his money comes in. I railed at him, Matrena. I scored him roundly for not paying his just dues.

MATRENA And what have you there? [SIMON produces the shoes and MATRENA is further enraged.] I thought as much. You've taken more work for the cheater. You let him hoodwink you out of your senses while your old wife may go hungry and cold. ^{and how to} What's this?

SIMON He gave me ^{5 dollars} two copecks for bread.

[MATRENA hurls them angrily on the floor at SIMON's feet. The old man patiently picks them up.]

MATRENA ^{5 dollars} Bread, bah! It would not buy a half-a-loaf. ^{thing} The thief! It is a shame, a shame. [She rocks herself, crying then falls into a chair by the fire, her apron thrown over her head and gives way to grief.]

SIMON [distressed] Come now, Matrena, why will you wag your tongue so foolishly? If we have bread for the day, the morrow will provide for itself. As for the coat, I shall go to Vanya, the vendor of skins, and get one on credit.

[The ANGEL OF DARKNESS peers in at the window, then disappears.]

MATRENA And who would give the likes of us credit with not a dessiatine of land to our share?

SIMON [putting the shoes on the bench and preparing for outdoors.]

Vanya will. I have bought many skins from him for my shoes. I have favored him in his turn.

MATRENA Men forget past favors in the face of present desires. But if you are going out you had better put my woolen jacket under your kaftan. The wind is bitter cold today.

[She goes to the curtains to the left of the stairs and takes down a close-fitting woolen sack. From a shelf of the cupboard she lifts a ja and shakes into her hand some money. SIMON is drawing on woolen slippers over his shoes. He puts on MATRENA's jacket, a woolen kaftan or smock over it, and throws the sheepskin about his shoulders. On his bald head he draws a fur cap.]

SIMON [submitting to MATRENA's ministrations] Thank you, Matrena, I shall feel quite warm in this old sheepskin. I shan't want a new one in a lifetime. [He goes up the steps.]

MATRENA You won't get one, the way you conduct your business. Now, Simon, here are three roubles, give these to Vanya on account and he should then let you have the skin.

SIMON He will, wife, he will.

MATRENA Now go, and do not stop for vodka on the way -- your tongue is loose enough as it is. And do not talk aloud to yourself as your custom, for if a thief learns you have the roubles, he will not be above killing you for them.

SIMON God is my protection. May his good angel guard our house in my absence! Good day, Matrena!

MATRENA Good day, Simon!

[He goes out, closing the door. She looks after him affectionately, then goes to the closet and taking an iron pot from the shelf hangs it before the fire. Seeing that all is well, she crosses and goes into the inner room. The basement is but dimly lighted. The ANGEL OF DARKNESS, after peering into the window to see that the coast is clear, comes in from the street, closing the door after him. He moves quickly and is merry as though about to reap some reward for his efforts. From out the curtains by the stairs, steps the ANGEL OF LIGHT in long flowing garmen. The ANGEL OF LIGHT remains in the shadows and is never clearly visible.]

ANGEL OF LIGHT Why are you here?

[The ANGEL OF DARKNESS goes to the hearth and sits in front of the fire. He shows no surprise at being spoken to by the ANGEL OF LIGHT, and does not look in his direction as he answers.]

ANGEL OF DARKNESS To try my luck to see if I can win old Simon with my dice. He has begun to ask for credit and if he stops for vodka, as I shall see that he does, that will be one more step in my direction.

ANGEL OF LIGHT His faith is strong.

ANGEL OF DARKNESS So are my dice, ha! Ha! [He throws them.]
Three, six, nine! The three means that he will have a little luck; it will make him drink vodka and forget his wife. Six, he will prosper, and when a man prospers in this world he forgets the next. Nine, nine, that is not so well. Nine means that I shall get him -- if -- yet "if's" are so little in my way. So I shall get him, unless--

ANGEL OF LIGHT Unless?

ANGEL OF DARKNESS [rising] Unless a greater than thou come into his home to protect him.

ANGEL OF LIGHT I am an Angel of Light. I stand guard here.

ANGEL OF DARKNESS [on the stairs] I shall make the roubles jingle in his pockets so that he shall not hear you. If nine had been twelve -- but we shall see. I am off now to the home of the baron, who long ago drowned the voice of his angel in vodka. I mixed his first glass. On my way, I shall mix a glass for Simon, to bring up in him all the evil there is.

ANGEL OF LIGHT His faith is great.

[the ANGEL OF DARKNESS laughs derisively as he goes out and slams the door, and the ANGEL OF LIGHT disappears again in the shadows. Feet go by the window and voices are heard. Then just as MATRENA comes in and goes to the fire, there is a knock.]

MATRENA Come in.

[A comely woman of middle-age enters. She is rather overdressed in poor clothes that strive to imitate the rich. It is ANNA MALOSKA.]

MATRENA Ah, Anna Maloska, is it you? [I thought I saw smoke and I came to tend our fire.] Come in.

ANNA [sniffing] [It smells like smoke that's bad luck, who was it went out?](Oh my poor feet.)

see the landlord's portrait in the

MATRENA Sit down. Simon has gone to buy a sheepskin. Is it cold out?

ANNA [sitting and throwing back her wraps] Bitter cold.

MATRENA [sitting on the other side of the fire and tending the porridge] I do hope Simon won't catch cold and I do hope the sheepskin-seller won't cheat him. That man of mine is a regular simpleton. *low*

ANNA [patting MATRENA's shoulder] They all are, poor dears.

MATRENA Simon never cheats a soul himself, yet a little child can lead him by the nose. It's time he was back; he had not *far* to go.

ANNA Perhaps he has stopped for a glass of vodka. *colored*

MATRENA [walking to the window and looking out] I do hope he hasn't gone making merry, that rascal of mine.

ANNA Ah, Matrena, they all are rascals. *Do you like my hat?*

MATRENA *Yes, yes* Aye, aye, it is very tasty; though if I might say, a *little* youthful. *little*

ANNA Why shouldn't a woman cheat Father Time if she can? He liked my hat.

MATRENA Who?

ANNA I mean Martin Pakhom. I just met him at the door and he said, "Good day, Anna, what a beautiful hat that is you're wearing."

MATRENA They say Martin drinks like a trout.

ANNA Ah, they all do, poor dears. [Gathering up her basket] I must go on. Fifi, my little dog, will be wanting his supper. *won't you walk away with me?*

MATRENA *will be back soon* Simon went out with all our coats on and left me nothing to wear. Besides I must have his supper ready, and clean out my bedroom.

ANNA [at the stairs] I wish I had someone to get supper for. [she goes up to the door] Good-bye, Matrena

[ANNA goes. MATRENA, stirring her porridge, sits near the fire. The feet of two men pass the window. They belong to SIMON and a stranger. The men enter. The stranger is a young man, tall and slender, with fine clear-cut features and a mild gentle expression. He is without stockings being clad in SIMON's woolen slippers and kaftan. He stands hesitating at the foot of the steps. MATRENA has risen and regards the two men angrily. "What tramp is this now, Simon has brought home?" she is wondering. The old man approaches his wife fearfully.]

SIMON Well, Matrena, here we are home again. [MATRENA, after a scathing glance, turns her back on him, and tends her fire.] We have brought our appetites with us. Get us some supper, will you? [He takes off his sheepskin and cap, but still MATRENA does not respond. He motions the stranger to a chair at the right.] Sit you down, brother, and we will have some supper. Have you anything cooked that you could give us?

MATRENA [facing him in rage] Yes, I have something cooked, but not for you. I can see you have drunk your senses away. [As he starts to protest,] Do you think I can't smell your breath? Where is our sheepskin? Did you drink up all the three roubles? *money*

[SIMON goes to the stranger and reaching in the pocket of the kaftan, takes out the roubles.]

SIMON No, Matrena, I did not get the sheepskin because the vendor would not let me have one unless I brought all the money. "Bring all the cash," he said, "and then you can pick what skin you like. We all know how difficult it is to get *money* out of a debt." But here are your roubles. I only spent the two copecks for the merest drop to send the blood bubbling finely in my veins. You know how cold it is.

MATRENA [eyeing the stranger] I have no supper for a pair of drunkards like you. One cannot feed every drunkard that comes along when one has not enough in the pot for two.

SIMON Hold your tongue, Matrena. Give me time to explain.

MATRENA How much sense am I likely to hear from a drunken fool, indeed! You go out to buy a sheepskin and then drink it away.

SIMON But I did not --

MATRENA [beside herself with rage] Give me my coat! It's the ^{money back} only one I have, Yet you sneak it off while I stay home for lack of clothes. [As she snatches the coat and starts to the other room, her anger is burning off.] You, you haven't told me who this fellow is. ^{and get drunk}

SIMON If you would give me a chance for a word, I will. I saw this man lying by the chapel yonder, half-naked and frozen. It is not summer time, you must remember. God led me to him, else he must have perished. I thought to myself the man could be up to no good there and if I went back I might be robbed and murdered. Then, I said, "Fie, Simon, for shame! Would you let a man die for want of clothing and food at your very door?" What could I do? So I took him, clothed and brought him along. Don't be so angry, Matrena. It is a sin. Remember, we must all die one day.

[Angry words rise to MATRENA's lips, but she looks at the stranger and is silent. He sits on the edge of the bench, motionless, his hands folded on his knees, his head drooping, his eyes closed, and his brows knit as if in pain. She is silent.]

SIMON Matrena, have you no love of God?

* → *Choral Speaking*

[MATRENA turns back from the door, sets a teapot on the table and pours some kvass, laying knives and forks by the plates and serving the porridge.]

MATRENA Here is ^{coffee} kvass and ^{beans} porridge. There is no bread. [They eat hunbly. MATRENA stops before the stranger.] What is your name?

MICHAEL [lifting his serious eyes to her face] Michael.

MATRENA Where did you come from?

MICHAEL I am not from these parts.

MATRENA How did you come to be on the road?

MICHAEL I cannot say.

MATRENA Did someone rob you?

MICHAEL God punished *me*.

SIMON Of course, all things come from God. Well, Michael, if you don't wish to talk about yourself, that is your own affair; but you'll have to earn a living for yourself. Do you know any trade?

MICHAEL No, none.

MATRENA [her heart warming within her] You could learn. I know, Simon, he could learn, if you would teach him. He might stay with us. There is enough ~~straw for another bed in the hallway.~~ *an old mattress in the basement*

MICHAEL The Lord be good to you! *(not necessary)* [I was lying frozen and unclothed, when Simon saw and took compassion on me. He shared with me his clothing and brought me ^{here} ~~hither~~.] You have given me food and drink and shown me great kindness.

MATRENA No I was not kind. I am ashamed of myself. [She goes to the cupboard and brings out the one bit of bread.] And I lied. I said there was no bread. ~~There is one crust and you shall have half.~~

MICHAEL But you?

MATRENA [gently] Eat, we have enough. You are welcome to stay with us as long as you wish. [MICHAEL turns and smiles radiantly on her.] Let us eat.

MICHAEL God's blessing on this house.

CHORAL READING "Remember, O Thou Man" *Speak &/or Sing Verse I & II*

Remember, O thou man, O thou man, O thou man,
Remember, O thou man, Thy time is spent.
Remember, O thou man, How thou cam'st to me then,
And I did what I can, Therefore repent.

Remember God's goodness, O thou man, O thou man,
Remember God's goodness And promise made.
Remember God's goodness How His own Son He sent,
Our sins for to redress; Be not afraid.

#29 SONGS OF LIGHT

SCENE II

[There is an air of greater prosperity than before. The cobbler's bench is new. There are flowers in the window-box and on the mantel. It is spring outside. The sound of hammering is heard within. The outer door opens and MATRENA enters with ANNA MALOSKA. The two women have been to market. MATRENA is well, though quietly dressed. ANNA, as usual, in bright colors.]

MATRENA Come in, Anna.

ANNA The men are not here? I wished to ask Simon about my shoes.

MATRENA They are inside, building another room. We have needed it since Michael came. Michael made the new bench.

ANNA Michael ~~seems to~~ do everything well.

MATRENA [enthusiastically] Ah, he is wonderful. Everything that Simon teaches him he learns readily. The first day he learned to twine and twist the thread, no easy task for the apprentice. The third day, he was able to work as though he had been a cobbler all his life. He never makes mistakes, and eats no more than a sparrow. [They sit down at the table.]

ANNA He is woefully solemn.

MATRENA ^{Yes} Aye, he works all day, only resting for a moment to look upward. He never wishes to go out of doors; never jests, ^{jested} nor laughs. He has only smiled once; it was the night he came.

ANNA Has he any family?

MATRENA He never speaks of his own affairs.

ANNA I should manage to worm it out of him, trust me. Martin shall have no secrets from me. I'm to marry Martin, you know.

MATRENA ^{Are you} When are you to marry, Anna?

ANNA Next month. Isn't it wonderful!

MATRENA Martin was in for shoes last week.

ANNA Yes, he says no one sews so strongly and so neatly as Michael.

MATRENA ^{Should be increased ten-fold} ~~People come to Simon from all the country around.~~ ^{Yes} Since Michael came, his business has increased ten-fold. ^{times}

ANNA ^{Yes} Aye, Martin says the fame of Simon's apprentice has crept abroad. ^{gone around}

MATREBA Here comes Simon now.

[SIMON and MICHAEL enter from the right. The latter is in simple workmen's clothes. He bows gravely without speaking and going to the bench bends over his work. SIMON approaches the women who have risen.]

SIMON Ah, Anna Maloska, how fares the bride today?

ANNA Well, thank you, Simon. I came to order some new shoes.

SIMON Good, Anna. Shall we make them the same size as before? Sixes, I believe?

ANNA No, Simon, I wish sevens this time. Good-bye, Matrena. Good-bye, Simon.

SIMON & MATRENA Farewell, Anna.

MATRENA Come again, Anna.

ANNA [at the door] Simon, are Martin's shoes finished?

SIMON No, Anna, but don't worry; they will be. I had to send for more leather.

ANNA [Looking out, becomes greatly excited] Oh, Matrena, a fine gentleman in a great coat is getting out here. He has ~~two coachmen and a footman~~. I think it is the Baron. *Mr. Baron* I must run out of his way. [She disappears. SIMON and MATRENA look out the window.]

MATRENA It is the Baron Avedeitch, isn't it, Simon?

SIMON There is no mistaking the ~~Baron~~, and he is coming here.

[The door has been left open and it is presently filled by a huge form that has to bow its head to enter the low portal. The BARON has a ruddy, bibulous countenance, a neck like a bull's, and a figure of cast-iron. He straightens up inside the door.]

BARON [in a loud pompous tone] Which of you is the master bootmaker?

SIMON [stepping aside] I am, your honor.

BARON [calling out the door] Hi, Thedka! Bring me the stuff here. [He comes down into the room, followed by the footman, who places the bundle on the table.] Untie it. [The footman does so, disclosing two sheets of leather. He then withdraws. MATRENA curtsies everytime anyone looks her direction, though no one heeds her.] Look here, bootmaker. Do you see this?

SIMON Yes, your nobility.

BARON Do you know what it is?

SIMON It is good leather.

BARON [thundering for emphasis] Good leather, indeed! You blockhead, you have never seen such leather in your life before. It is of northern make and cost twenty roubles. Could you make me a pair of boots out of it?

SIMON Possibly so, your-honor. Sir

BARON "Possibly so!" Well, first, listen. I want a pair of boots that shall last a year, will never tread over, and never split at the seams. If you can make such boots, then set to work and cut out at once, but if you cannot, do neither. I tell you beforehand that if the new pair should split or tread over before the year is out, I will clap you in prison.

MATRENA Oh, your-honor. Sir

BARON [ignoring her] But, if they should not do so, then I will pay you ten roubles for your work.

SIMON [turning to MICHAEL] What do you think about it, brother?

MICHAEL Take the work, Simon.

SIMON Very well, sir, --

BARON [sits and extends his foot] Hi, Thedka. [The footman advances and draws off the boot. The BARON then motions to SIMON. MICHAEL has advanced.] Take my measure. [MICHAEL kneels and takes the measure of the sole and of the instep. He has to fasten on an extra piece of paper to measure the calf as the muscles of the BARON's leg are as thick as a beam.] Take care care you don't make them too tight in the leg. [As MICHAEL draws back, the footman replaces the boot on his master's foot, then withdraws again to the door.]

BARON [indicating MICHAEL] Who is this you have with you?

SIMON That is my skilled workman who will sew your boots.

BARON [standing and stamping into his boot] Look you sharp, then, and remember this -- that you are to sew them so that they will last a year. [MICHAEL does not respond but stands gazing past the BARON as though he saw some one back at him. His face suddenly breaks into a smile and he brightens all over. The BARON, irritated, glances behind him, then scowls at MICHAEL.] What are you grinning at, you fool? I see no one behind me to grin at. You had better see that the boots are ready when I want them. [He stalks up the steps.]

MICHAEL They will be ready when you need them.

BARON Mind it is so! [Forgets to stoop, strikes his head against the lintel, swears, and goes out. The footman follows, closing the door.]

MATRENA What a man!

SIMON He is as hard as a flint stone. You could not kill him with a mallet -- nothing could harm a man like him.

MATRENA Why wouldn't he get hardened with the life he leads? Even death itself would not take such an iron rivet of a man.

SIMON [taking the leather to MICHAEL at the bench] Well, Michael, we have undertaken the work and we must take care not to go amiss over it. This leather is valuable stuff.

MATRENA And the gentleman is short-tempered.

SIMON Aye, there must be no mistakes. You have the sharper eyes, as well as the greater skill in your fingers, so take these measures and cut out the stuff, while I finish sewing these toe-caps.

MICHAEL I will make them according to ~~his~~ ^{his} needs.

[The men sit working while MATRENA busies herself with the housework.]

MATRENA Oh, Simon, I forgot to tell you, ^{Princess Moore} Sonia Ivanich is coming by to get shoes for her two little girls. The little ^{Tanya} Nikita is hard to fit, but Madame has heard that Michael can fit even a lame foot. ^{Mr. Moore}

MICHAEL [drops his work and leans forward] A lame child?

MATRENA Yes, poor little thing -- but hush, I hear the ^{you!} ~~clamp~~ ^{them coming now} clamp of a wooden-foot. Come, Simon, and greet her. ~~Madame has money; you are getting all the best trade now.~~

[SIMON puts down his work and comes forward. MATRENA hastens up to the door and holds it open. A gentle, good-looking lady enters with two pretty little girls. They have round wide eyes, rosy cheeks, and wear smart little shawls and dresses.]

SONIA Good day ^{morning} to you, mistress.

MATRENA The same to you, ^{Mr. Moore} madame, and the young ^{ladies} misses. Won't you sit down?

[SONIA sits by the table, the two little girls burying their faces in her skirts from timidity. She pats them tolerantly. MICHAEL keeps regarding them, though he works.]

- Are you Simon?*
- SONIA Thank you. Is this Master Simon?
- SIMON *I am Maam*
It is, madame. What can we do for you?
- SONIA I wish a pair of boots made for each of these little girls to wear this spring.
- SIMON Very well, madame. Will you have them leather throughout or lined with linen?
- SONIA *lined*
I believe linen will be softer. [The lame child has slipped over to MICHAEL and he takes her on his knee.] Well, will you see Nikita? I have never known her to take to a stranger so. *Tanya*
- MATRENA All the children love Michael. He is Simon's skilled workman. He will take the measures.
- [Michael measures the little feet. The child pats his head.]
- NIKITA I love you. Have you a little a girl?
- MICHAEL [gently] No, I have no little girl.
- SONIA Take both sets of measures from this little girl and make one boot for the crooked foot and three ordinary ones. The two children take the same size; they are twins.
- MATRENA How came she to be lame? Such a pretty little lady.
- SONIA Her parents had a tragic end.
- MATRENA [surprised] Then you are not their mother?
- SONIA No, I adopted them. But I love them as much as though they were my own and they are as happy as the day is long; they know no difference.
- SIMON Whose children were they?
- SONIA The children of *peasants*. The father died on a Tuesday from the *falling* of a tree. The mother died that Friday, just after the twins were born. She was poor and alone. When we found them, the children were still alive, but the mother in dying had rolled onto this child and crushed her leg.
- MATRENA Poor little mother!
- SONIA I was the only one in the village with a young child, so they were given to me to nurse. God took my own little one unto Himself, but I have come to love these like my own flesh. I could not live without them. They are to me as wax is to the candle.

SIMON It is a true saying which reads, "Without father and mother we may live, but without God -- never."

** Choral speaking*
[All are drawn to look toward MICHAEL who, sitting with his hands folded on his knees, is gazing upward and smiling as though at some one unseen by the others.]

TANYA Look at him - he's smiling
SONIA [rising] Good day, master. Come Nikita, we will stop in again to try the boots.

SIMON In seven days, mistress. We thank you.

NIKITA Good-bye, man!

MICHAEL Good-bye, little one!

SONIA Well, I never! The little dear! [She goes out with the children]

SIMON Michael, if you will bring me the awl from the other room, I too, will work. He approaches the bench as MICHAEL goes into the other room for the awl. He suddenly cries aloud in dismay.] What has he done? What can ail the fellow?

MATRENA What is it? [She hastens to his side.]

SIMON [groaning] Oh! How is it that Michael who has lived with me for a whole year without making a single mistake, should now make such a blunder as this? The Baron ordered high boots and Michael has gone and sewn a pair of soleless slippers and spoiled the leather.

MATRENA [aghast] Michael has done this!

SIMON Alas, yes, and you heard what the gentleman said. I could replace an ordinary skin, but one does not see leather like this every day. [MICHAEL returns with the awl.] My good fellow, what have you done? You have simply ruined me! The gentleman ordered high boots, but what have you gone and made instead? [Before MICHAEL has a chance to respond, there is a loud knock at the door.]

SIMON Come in! [The door is opened and THEDKA, the footman of the BARON, enters. SIMON pushes the slipper behind him.]

THEDKA Good day to you.

SIMON [uneasily] Good day. What can we do for you?

Mr. Baron
THEDKA My mistress sent me about the boots.

SIMON Yes? What about them?

THEDKA My master will not need them now. He is dead.

MATRENA What are you saying!

THEDKA He died on the way home. When we went to help him out, he lay dead on the floor of the carriage.

MATRENA God help us.

THEDKA My ^{his wife} mistress sent me to tell the bootmaker that the gentleman who ordered the boots no longer needs them. You must quickly use that leather for a pair of slippers. She said to wait until they are ready. That is why I have come.

SIMON You shall have them now.

[MICHAEL gathers up the remnants of the leather and rolls them up. He picks up the slippers, wipes them down with his apron, and hands them and the leather to THEDKA. Then MICHAEL, unseen by the others, goes into the other room.]

THEDKA Good-bye masters and good day to you.

SIMON And to you.

[THEDKA goes out, leaving SIMON and MATRENA gazing at each other in awe. They turn to where MICHAEL stood by the inner door, but he has disappeared.]

MATRENA Michael is no ordinary being. We might have guessed before this.

SIMON You remember how he smiled?

MATRENA He has smiled three times.

SIMON Let us see what he is doing.

MATRENA You don't suppose he would ^{leave} go without a word, do you?

[They go into the other room. Immediately the ANGEL OF DARKNESS appears in the doorway at the back and the ANGEL OF LIGHT is seen in the shadow the curtains at the left.]

ANGEL OF LIGHT You have lost!

ANGEL OF DARKNESS [with a stamp of his foot] I have lost Simon's ^{Soul} but I have the Baron's.

ANGEL OF LIGHT The faith of Simon is great. He loves God.

ANGEL OF DARKNESS That did not save him!

ANGEL OF LIGHT One greater than I saved Simon. It was God! And He is the final Judge for all souls.

[At these words, the ANGEL OF DARKNESS stamps his foot again, slams the door, and goes. The ANGEL OF LIGHT disappears. From the other room come MATRENA and SIMON, crossing to the hearth.]

SIMON He was in prayer.

MATRENA His face was illumined and such a light shone from him that at first I thought it was a fire. Oh, Simon, who is this that has dwelt with us?

** Choral Speaking*
[MICHAEL comes in from the other room, goes to the steps where he turns and faces them.]

MICHAEL God has forgiven me, good master and mistress. I ask your forgiveness too, for anything done wrong. Yes.

** SIMON* Tell us, Michael, who you are and why God punished you. Why does your face shine so?

MICHAEL I was an angel in Heaven and God punished me because I disobeyed him. Now He has pardoned me. He sent me to earth to bear away a woman's soul. But the woman, who had given birth to twin babies, cried to me, "Angel of God, I cannot leave them. They will die. I have no kin to care for them. Do not take away my soul. Children cannot live without mother or father!" So I listened to the mother and flew back to God, saying, "Little children cannot live without mother or father, so I did not take away the mother's soul." Then God said to me, "Go take the mother's soul and learn three truths. Learn: WHAT DWELLS IN MAN; WHAT IS NOT GIVEN TO MAN; and WHAT MEN LIVE BY. When you have learnt these things, you may return to Heaven."

SIMON Tell us what you did, Michael.

MICHAEL I went to earth and took the soul of the woman, then I rose above the village and tried to bear the soul to God, but a wind caught me, so that my wings hung down and were blown from me. The soul returned alone to God, while I fell to earth along the roadside.

MATRENA And then Simon found you?

MICHAEL I was alone in the field, I had never known human needs, cold, and hunger, until I became a man. I tried to find shelter. It became late and a man passed me talking to himself of how to clothe and feed himself and his wife. When he saw me, he frowned and looked terrible. I despaired, but suddenly he returned and I did not recognize him. I had seen death in Simon's face, but now he was alive and I could see in him the Presence of God.

SIMON Tell, me Michael, why you smiled three times, and what were the three truths of God.

MICHAEL When we came to your house and met you ^{Margaret} Matrena -- the spirit of Death came from your Mouth. Suddenly you, Simon spoke to her of God and she changed. She became alive. In her too I saw God and I smiled because I knew the First Truth of God: "What dwells in man." And I knew by your goodness that in man dwells love.

MATRENA What was it you saw behind the ^{Baron} Baron that made you smile? What Truth was there?

MICHAEL I saw the Angel of Death. No one but ^I saw him, and I thought, here is this man planning for boots that shall last a year, when he is to die before the nightfall. Then I smiled when I remembered that God had said, "You will learn what is ^{not} given to men to know." No man knows the hour of his death.

SIMON What was it made you smile at the story of the good Sonia-Ivanich?

MICHAEL I recognized the children as the twins that I had thought would die without father or mother. But I smiled when I heard that this woman, a stranger, had fed and loved them. I have learnt that all men live not by care for themselves, but by love. It was not given to the mother to know what her children needed for their life. I understand now that God does not wish men to live apart. And ~~therefore He does not~~ reveal to them what each needs for himself. He wishes them to live united and so reveals to each of them what is necessary for all. In reality men live by love alone. He who has love is in God and God is in him, for God is love.

[The room is suddenly black as night. Then a hymn bursts forth as though from a great choir of voices, and in the doorway MICHAEL, bathed in light stands looking upward.]

Choir sings: "O Love you stoop down low to earth"
58 in SONGS OF ~~LOVE~~ LIGHT